



By Chuck Williams  
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U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., was in Atlanta Wednesday addressing the Georgia General Assembly. The statehouse and governor's office is controlled by Republicans, but Bishop, because of his close connection to the Obama Administration, was a welcome visitor. On Tuesday, the president signed the federal \$787 billion stimulus package.

"We want to create jobs," Bishop said in a brief speech to the Georgia House. "Hopefully, this package will create 3.5 million jobs for taxpayers."

Bishop also extended a hand to the Republican-dominated General Assembly.

"We look forward to working with you as partners across the aisle," he said. "The good thing about adversity is it forces us to come together and work together."

The state Republicans have been eagerly awaiting Georgia's chunk of the stimulus to help address a state budget facing a shortfall that could exceed \$2.5 billion or 10 percent.

The stimulus money could help fund transportation projects, education and Medicaid. Georgia could end up with between \$1 billion and \$3 billion, Bishop said.

Bishop said he did not want to discuss how many state Republicans had broken ranks with their national counterparts as the money flows into the states. He met with Gov. Sonny Perdue, Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and Speaker of the House Glenn Richardson.

"I don't know that it is constructive for me to talk about that," he said. "I talked to the speaker and the lieutenant governor about the shortfalls the state is facing. They were hopeful that something could come out to ease the strain."

Bishop said everyone needs to put politics aside and work to find solutions.

"This is an American crisis and we've got to solve it," he said.

Bishop said his meeting with Perdue went well.

“He personally thanked me,” Bishop said. “The governor wanted me to know they were going to make wise decisions and use the money well. He said they would make it go as far as it could go.”

While Bishop was in Atlanta talking about the stimulus plan, U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., was in Columbus. He said the state must use the money with care, and he cautioned the state House and Senate of that on Tuesday, then repeated the warning Wednesday in Columbus.

“This could magnify the budget crisis a year from now when the money is gone and you have to fix it yourself,” Isakson said. In years past, it has been Isakson and his Republican colleagues who have been best positioned to push for Georgia’s needs.

Now, it is Bishop who is most closely aligned with the White House.

Isakson knows that.

“Sanford is an old goat like me,” Isakson said. “He’s going to bat for the state. I am sure he will do a good job.”

Isakson said his plan to offer home buyers up to a \$15,000 tax credit is not dead, though it was not in the federal \$787 billion stimulus package that President Obama signed this week.

“It’s not even on life support,” Isakson said Wednesday during a campaign stop in Columbus. He is touring the state, announcing his intentions to run for re-election in 2010.

Isakson, a real estate broker before he was elected to Congress, has been pushing the tax-credit proposal to help spur the stagnant housing market. He got the provision in the version of the bill that came out of the Senate, but it was greatly reduced when House and Senate leaders worked out a compromise bill.

What passed was an \$8,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers with limits on the incomes of the purchasers. Even though Isakson had the provision he wanted in the Senate bill, he joined all but three Republicans in voting against it.

Why?

“I had pretty good intelligence in terms of what was going to happen,” Isakson said. “The battle is not over. There are a lot more pieces of this puzzle that still have to come together.”

He said he never considered swapping his vote to keep the provision in the final version.

“If you ever get in the quid pro quo business you become a prisoner of the deal,” he said.

Isakson has been through four recessions, but this one is different.

“Been through ’68, ’74, ’81-82 and ’90-91,” he told the largely Republican crowd gathered at the

Chattahoochee River Club. "But this one is a doozy."